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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE ROAD MAP

NEA/PPD FOR DMACINNES, WMOONEY, JGAFFNEY

SUMMARY: 1. Most Yemeni official and opposition newspapers reported and commented on the road map and the Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba meetings. The two official papers considered the road map to be an achievement for peace if it ensures the legitimate rights of Palestinians. However, most other papers described the road map as a justification to eradicate the Palestinian resistance by Palestinians themselves. Overall, Yemeni media have adopted a skeptical attitude toward recent Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts and given the issue far less play than Iraq received in the run up to OIF. END SUMMARY

2. "September 26" the official weekly of the Yemeni Armed Forces, noted on June 5 that Yemen welcomed the road map in which the Palestinian side declared its acceptance. The paper said that Yemen reiterated its support for the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. "Foreign Minister Dr. al-Qirbi called on the U.S. and the Quartet to commit themselves to the implementation of the road map without postponement or amendment. The paper noted that Al-Qirbi underlined Yemen's appreciation of the importance that President Bush personally committed himself to achieve a comprehensive and just peace and to work for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

3. The official daily "Al-Thawra in its June 4 editorial considered that it was not sufficient for America to sponsor peace or just dedicate itself to creating confidence between disputing parties. The paper went on to say: "Washington should exert pressure on Israel to give up its haughty settlement policy and respond to the essential questions that could lead to security, peace, and stability"

4. The anti-American (putatively independent) weekly "al-Shumu'" reported that Speaker of Parliament Sheikh al-Ahmar criticized the "road map" saying that it is not for the interest of the Palestinian people or Arab and Muslim nations. "Al-Ahmar considered that the U.S. call for Arab leaders and Muslim nations to cooperate with the U.S. Administration in counter-terrorism is a shameful lie and an excuse for occupying Arab nations."

5. "Al-Shura" the weekly newspaper of the minor opposition Union of Popular Forces party, in an opinion piece on June 8 wrote: "The U.S. Administration in the Sharm al-Sheikh summit was able to receive Arab guarantees to put mechanisms in place and perhaps to administer a secret preventive war against what Washington describes as terrorism. Washington means by terrorism Hamas, Jihad, and the Palestinian al-Aqsa brigades as well as Hizbullah in South Lebanon."

6. "17 July" the pro-GPC (ruling party) weekly, editorialized on June 8: "The Central Authority of al-Quds Institution warned against making any compromises regarding the new U.S. initiative, the road map. It is one more step in a new series of U.S.-Zionist conspiracy against the Palestinian people to eliminate the Palestinian resistance and achieve Israeli security on the account of a bloody conflict between the resistance and the Palestinian authority."

7. "Wahj al-Haqiqa" another pro-GPC weekly, wrote in an analytical piece on June 7 that Bush's plan at the end does not seek to offer anything good to Palestinians, but to save Israelis from the hands of suicide bombers and abort that important weapon that caused heavy losses to Israel. "There are dozens of former plans that were not implemented such as Clinton, Mitchell, and Tenet plans as well as numerous UN resolutions. The Oslo convention itself was not implemented and was frozen or was left behind."

8. "Al-Ummah, the weekly newspaper of the minor Union Islamist opposition al-Haq party, in an op-ed article

June 5 wrote: "Counter-terrorism is an image for the U.S. in occupied Palestine and in the Arab region. This logic was confirmed for Arabs in Sharm al-Sheikh and for Palestinians in Aqaba and indicated that peace is another plot against Palestinians so they can kill each other."

9. "Al-Sahwa", the weekly newspaper of the Islamist opposition Islah party, in an opinion article June 5 wrote: "The U.S. choice of time in Madrid in the nineteen-nineties and Sharm al-Sheikh and Aqaba now proves that the U.S. Administration does not want to listen to conditions or talk about historical rights. Rather, it just wants to listen to commitments and pledges that it considers appropriate for the region. This explains why Syria and Lebanon were excluded from attending the Sharm al-Sheikh summit and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain were invited instead."

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